# 101st Airborne Division Knowledge Management strategic plan

*Excerpts from the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) Knowledge Management Strategy 02 April 2011*

## Introduction

Knowledge Management means different things to every organization depending on several factors: the operational environment, age of the organization, stability of the work force, ability to adapt to new and changing technologies, the culture and structure of the organization, and the leadership focus.

Because of these factors, this strategy focuses on supporting the knowledge environment instead of trying to define knowledge management.  The knowledge environment is made up of an overall set of organizational activities that enable knowledge flow with the goal of improving individual and collective learning, achieving high performance, promoting faster innovation and shortening the decision cycle from the Senior Leaders to the Soldiers fighting on the battlefield. By focusing on the components that make up the knowledge environment the ability to influence change happens at a faster pace than normal.  The components that make up this environment are people, processes, technology, culture, structure and content (See Figure 1).

The knowledge environment encompasses every aspect of the organization, making it imperative that leaders at all levels support the knowledge management strategy ensuring the organizational culture is one focused on continuous improvement.

This KM Strategy is the first in a set of documents which includes a KM plan and a KM SOP.  The KM plan will be developed upon completion of a knowledge assessment to identify gaps in the knowledge environment with a "way ahead" developed to close those gaps.  The KM SOP is a living document that will be continuously revised depending on various factors including where the organization is within the Army Force Generation cycle.  Areas that will be addressed in the KM Plan and SOP include: current situation; short and long term goals and objectives; proposed glide path; measures of effectiveness and metrics; KM section roles and responsibilities; the KM workgroup and KM representatives; risks and barriers to success; identified best practices; etc.

## The Vision

In order to create a culture of knowledge sharing within the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), the leadership will strive to break down communication stovepipes to provide greater information transparency; enhance cross-organizational collaboration; ensure Soldiers not only ask "Who needs to know?" but also "Who else needs to know?"; reward efforts to improve knowledge sharing; create a common operational network with ease of access; respond with "please post in the portal" instead of "email it to me"; and make every effort to create a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

## The Mission

The mission of the knowledge management section is to provide the command and staff of 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) with solutions designed to help the commander and staff sections improve processes, build a more efficient collaborative environment and better utilize their information sharing tools.  This is done by conducting continuous formal and informal assessments of how the organization manages its knowledge environment with particular focus on people, processes and technology while remaining true to the Division's inherent culture of high performance, striving for excellence and mission accomplishment.  From these assessments, knowledge gaps are identified and the KM section works with the organization to develop solution sets to close those gaps.



Figure 1

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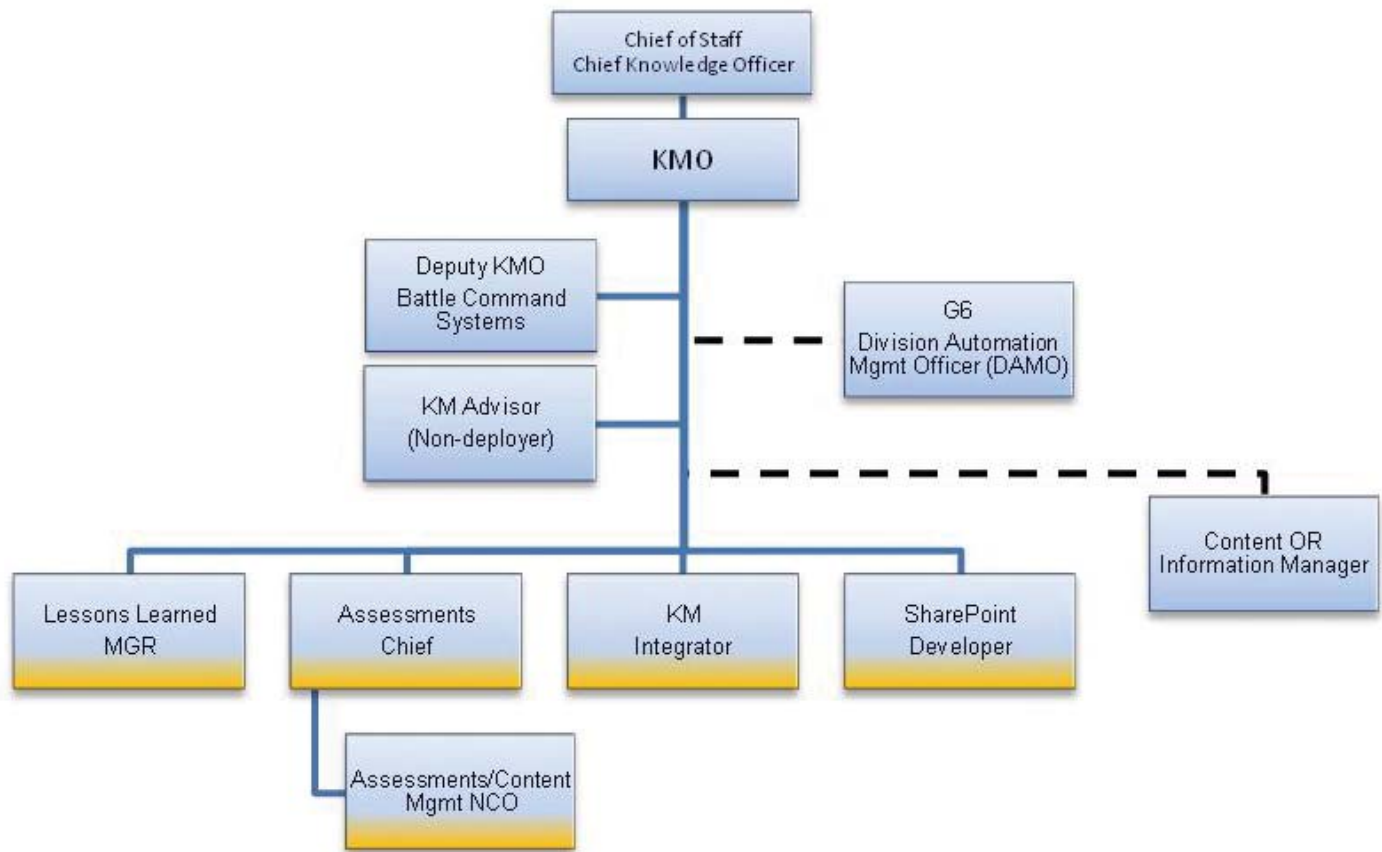Prescribed by ANSI Std Z39-18

Figure 2

## Implementation

In order for the KM Strategy to be successful, the Division will implement it in three non-linear phases. The tasks supporting these phases can be applied at any time, but are sequenced to show the stages necessary to support either establishment of a new KM Section or upon a significant change to mission/phase of the ARFORGEN cycle. Table 1, on the final page of the KM strategy, provides greater detail regarding how each KM component is supported by various KM tasks. As in the following phases, the tasks may support the ARFORGEN cycle where required, as determined through commander's guidance and assessment.

## Phase I

Phase I prepares the KM Section to support the mission, ensuring it's resourced with the people, tools, training and budget necessary to:
• Build and develop the KM Team (Figure 2 depicts both a Division KM team and the structure of the CJTF-101 KM team during OEF XI, 2010-11).
• Conduct continuous assessments in support of the command, including assessing the office's capabilities and priorities in support of the command.
• Prepare and provide small group and one-on-one KM training.

• Create a KM plan, KM SOP and/or KM annex to operations orders.
• Design metrics to monitor measures of performance improvement throughout all phases.
• Facilitate meetings as either a lead or supporting staff. Research and apply solutions.
In Figure 2 above, The 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) KM Team (in light blue) with the CJTF-101 KM Team from Operation Enduring Freedom XI indicated by a gold lower border. Note the association of the team with the CJ6 Automation Management Officer and the Division's Information/Content Manager.

## Phase II

Phase II focuses on conducting assessments, training, coaching and mentoring:
• Create a knowledge assessment plan that encompasses the headquarters staff sections and their interactions with higher and lower headquarters.
• Conduct knowledge assessments of that organization.
• Identify knowledge gaps and recommending a strategy to close them.
• Identify the command's critical processes and apply KM to improve efficiency and knowledge sharing.

• Create KM courses for the different levels of the command structure to include senior leader, mid-grade leader, and Soldier levels.
• Develop the training implementation plan that includes new arrival training, workshops and desk-side mentoring sessions.
• Consider the full range of solutions under the construct of doctrine, organization, training, material, leadership, personnel, facilities and culture. Remember, not every solution involves a computer.

## Phase III

Phase III supports implementation of the recommendations generated during the knowledge assessment:
• Review recommendations and solution designs with stakeholders to ensure they're suitable, acceptable, feasible and enduring.
• Facilitate the development and implementation of solutions.
• Work closely with the Information Management and Automation Management offices to map the "knowledge environment."
• Identify redundant technological capabilities, disparate databases and content duplication to support efforts to streamline processes and improve knowledge discovery.
• Implement virtual collaboration capabilities such as Communities of Practice to improve horizontal information sharing.
Once this strategy is fully implemented the organization will:
• Put people as the focal point of every KM effort.
• Have Soldiers that understand the need to share knowledge across the organization.
• Have a shared understanding of the mission, vision and operational lines of effort.
• Understand that KM works for efficient solutions, not always a technological solution.
• Receive training on KM principles and common practices.
• Operate within an easily accessible common operating environment.
• Have a comprehensive knowledge network map that encompasses all communication and collaboration systems.
• Ensure unit in-processing includes coaching on established KM processes while highlighting key components of the common operating environment.
• Support staff sections as they create innovative methods to improve workflows and decrease staff action time.
• Ensure the battle rhythm is synchronized across the organization and redundant information is reduced to the extent possible.

• Implement meeting management principles that ensure the right people are in the right place for the right reasons – meetings are no longer viewed as "a waste of time."
• Have one organizational calendar for tracking key events across the unit.
• Understand that everyone has a stake in knowledge management and is a knowledge manager.
During the implementation of this strategy the KM section needs to consider the following:
• Not every solution is an IT solution. Sometimes it simply requires figuring out the right people to bring together and then facilitating a meeting to identify solutions to an issue.
• Identifying the "pockets of expertise" early will help make future jobs easier.
• Remember that everyone in the organization has experience and expertise in something so don't ignore the operator, admin clerk or line mechanic – they may know a better way.
• Communicate, communicate, communicate – even though word of mouth is a measure of success, the unit can easily get focused on the organization's operational tempo and forget the value you bring.
• Information overload hampers knowledge transfer. The staff's goal is to help the command filter through the information to find and transfer the nuggets of knowledge.

## Conclusion

Understanding the knowledge environment and focusing the KM section's efforts on the Division's mission and position in the ARFORGEN cycle are key factors in making the division more efficient and consistently effective in its operations. The KM Section must identify the command's critical tasks/processes and make recommendations to the chief of staff on how KM processes should be applied. This will help create the organizational culture that drives users to execute their tasks in a way that promotes knowledge sharing and efficient execution of missions.

JOHN P. JOHNSON
COL, GS
Chief of Staff

**KM Support throughout the ARFORGEN Cycle**

| | | RESET | TRAIN/READY | AVAILABLE/DEPLOY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Training Gates-> | Individual & Collective Trng | CAPSTONE Exercises (MRX/MRE/CTC) Enabled by BCTP | Support provided to MRX & PDSS |
| **K M C o m p o n e n t s** | People | • Individual/Team Training<br>• KM training<br>• Organizational Structure / Restructure<br>• Reception/Integration of new personnel<br>• Capture and storage of AARs/OIL/Leader Interviews<br>• ID In-bound and Out-bound expertise/experience<br>• Continue expertise capture initiatives<br>• Take opportunities to share deployed experiences | • METL Review/Revision<br>• Collective Training<br>• Software training (KM focus on common operational picture tools - ABCS and SP)<br>• New Equipment Training<br>• PDSS question development<br>• Identify and begin supporting KMOs and KM Representatives<br>• Identify and begin communicating with KM offices in theater<br>• Ensure personnel are trained on Foreign Disclosure and cross-network file sharing processes | • Support Virtual Right-Seat-Rides<br>• PDSS support<br>• Support KMOs and KM Representatives<br>• Collaborate with theater KM offices<br>• Identify expertise and begin knowledge capture processes |
| | | >------------------------------------Capture Expertise Throughout------------------------------------< | | |
| | Process | • SOP Review and Revision<br>• Establish Garrison battle rhythm<br>• Individual Training<br>• Re-organization as needed for efficiencies<br>• Battle Drill Review based off of deployment<br>• Review award and eval tracking systems for efficiencies<br>• Refine/Validate Continuity books<br>• Mission/Vision review<br>• Develop/refine mentorship program<br>• Leaders use blogs to keep Soldiers/families informed<br>• Collect and store AARs, reports, articles, etc in common database<br>• Schedule and conduct K assessments | • SOP Validation<br>• Collective Training<br>• METL Validation<br>• Cross Training<br>• Mission/Vision validation<br>• Refine deployed battle rhythm (B2C2WG)<br>• Train interview techniques to support knowledge capture (Cognative Task Analysis)<br>• Conduct Virtual Right-Seat-Rides<br>• Sections trained on Portal tools<br>• Continue K assessments<br>• Establish KM Work Group<br>• Integrate Meeting Management (virtual and Face-to-Face) TTPs | • Common Operating Picture continuously reviewed/revised as needed<br>• Process support to Cmd and Staff<br>• Continuity books continuously updated<br>• Commander's update posted/written on portal<br>• Prepare for and conduct virtual umbrella week<br>• Support Virtual Right-Seat-Rides<br>• KM Work Group integrated into battle rhythm |
| | | >------------------------------------Content Management Throughout------------------------------------<<br>>------------------------------------Refine Portal Structure Throughout------------------------------------<<br>>------------------------------------Refine Battle Rhythm Throughout------------------------------------< | | |
| | Technology | • Fall-in on Rear-Det info portal if it supports mission<br>• Create portal for daily operations<br>• Review info sharing systems to ID redundant capabilities<br>• Validate and incorporate customized code into systems | • Network development to match deployed environment<br>• Evaluate systems for redundant capabilities | • Optimize use of available information systems<br>• Map of network architecture(s) in use<br>• Prepare network for redeployment and to support RIPing unit |
| | Culture | • Focus on Integration of new personnel<br>• Identify amount of organizational knowledge being lost<br>• Review Team/Staff structure for optimization<br>• Develop atmosphere of collaboration and knowledge sharing | • Teamwork developed<br>• Virtual team/work spaces used to support battle rhythm<br>• Prepare to operate in a multi-national environment | • Virtual teaming is fully supported<br>• Integration of Coalition partners into operations<br>• Integrate with higher HQ, while integrating subordinate elements |
| | Structure | • Proper job skills for missions<br>• Evaluate office layout to ensure it supports collaboration<br>• Evaluate budget for proper funding | • Identify and work to ensure staff needs are met for deployment<br>• Conduct KM specific training to fill gaps | • Team fully staffed to support operational focus<br>• Rear detachment KM support for continuity of operations |

Ron Boscue, Contractor, CJTF-101 KM Office, March 2011

Table 1 - KM Support throughout the ARFORGEN Cycle